

A Case Study of the Articulation and Employment Opportunities of Hong Kong Associate Degree Graduates

By

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I, Tsui Wing Yiu, hereby certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

Higher education in Hong Kong has undergone major transformation over the past decade, responding to forces of globalisation, an increasingly knowledge-driven economy and international competitiveness. One significant development has been the growth in community colleges offering self-financed sub-degree programs, in particular the Associate Degree (AD). However, to date, little is known to of the experiences of AD graduates in terms of their articulation and employment prospects and their perceptions of the value of AD programs. This thesis explores how Hong Kong's self-financed post-secondary education sector has served to connect the New Senior Secondary (NSS) system with higher education and the significant parts played by both internal credit transfer and broader market forces.

This thesis is a qualitative case study of the perspectives of students, parents, teachers, employers and senior administrators of community colleges. It takes a rich, multi-perspectival approach consisting of semi-structured interviews, policy history, document analysis and recent evaluations of the AD program in Hong Kong in order to identify patterns of experience associated with articulation to higher education and employment post-graduation.

The study argues that government policy, the economic situation and institutional and personal factors, such as learner engagement, play an important role in affecting AD graduates' futures. This has implications for public and private managers in relation to quality improvement in the current sub-degree offerings in Hong Kong. The significance of the present study is that it provides qualitative cross-referencing to future developments at this transitional stage from the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and the A-Level (HKAL) examinations to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examination and from community colleges to private universities. The findings from the study have implications for the transfer of AD programs from the traditional education system (HKCEE and HKAL) to the NSS system, marking a progressive shift towards privatisation in Hong Kong higher education.

Abbreviations

AACC	American Association of Community Colleges
AD	Associate Degree
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
CCCU	Community College of City University
CEUs	Continuing Education Units
CMI	Chinese as Medium of Instruction
CSB	Civil Service Bureau
CU-TWGH CC	Chinese University Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Community College (In Hong Kong, the short form is: CUTW CC).
EC	Education Commission
EDB	Education Bureau
EMI	English as Medium of Instruction
FCE	Federation for Continuing Education
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
HD	Higher Diploma
HKCAA	Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (Renamed the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, HKCAAVQ, in 2008)
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
HKU-SPACE CC	The University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education Community College
HKU-SPACE PLK CC	The University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education Po Leung Kuk Community College
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IVE	Institute of Vocational Education
JQRC	Joint Quality Review Committee
JUPAS	Joint University Programs Admissions System
NSS	New Senior Secondary
QF	Qualifications Framework
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SPEED (Poly U)	The School of Professional Education and Executive Development of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UGC	University Grants Committee

VTC	Vocational Training Council
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